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First Committee
19th meeting
Friday, 20 October 2000, 10.00 a.m.
New York

Chairman: U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 65 to 81 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman: Before proceeding to the list of speakers I should like to inform the members of the Committee that the informal paper setting out the clusters of draft resolutions has been circulated to all delegations.

Mr. Lezona (Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would first like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair our work. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

The problem of the illicit circulation of and trade in small arms is continuing today both in regions engaged in armed conflict and in those in which peace and security have been solidly established. My country, which has had the sad and painful experience of war, and which now wishes to forget this terrible chapter of its history, considers today's debate very important. That is why we welcome the decision of the United Nations to organize in 2001 a Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, and we hope to make our contribution to enriching the programme of action that will be adopted.

In that context, we are actively participating in the preparations for the Bamako meeting next December, which will coordinate the African position on the question. For stress must be placed on solidarity and cooperation among States and others involved in working for effective international action to stem the trade in small arms, its effects, and the destitution it causes.

Backed by fruitful experience, at both national and subregional level, and in particular the signing of the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreements concluded on 16 November 1999 at Pointe-Noire and on 29 December 1999 at Brazzaville between national forces and the armed factions of the rebellion, through the mediation of President El Hadj Omar Bongo of Gabon, my country has associated itself with others as a sponsor of the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to States for curbing illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them" (document A/C.1/55/L.11). We ask for the full support of the First Committee so that the draft resolution can be adopted unanimously by the General Assembly.

In conclusion, my country would like to take advantage of this opportunity once again to thank the United Nations, and its Department for Disarmament Affairs, Department of Political Affairs and Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, for the assistance they have kindly provided and will be providing to the Congo in gathering information on small arms and in reintegrating former combatants following the action taken by the Congolese Government.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-70030 (E)

I should also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, and the Preparatory Committee for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, for the tireless and commendable efforts they are making in working for disarmament, peace, stability and the development of all nations and for the success of the Conference in 2001, of which we have great expectations.

Mr. Kongstad (Norway): I have asked for the floor to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction", document A/C.1/55/L.44. The draft resolution was presented by Mozambique, Nicaragua and Norway jointly and is now co-sponsored by the following countries: Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Gabon, Germany, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, the Niger, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Moldova, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, the Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, the following countries are also sponsors of the draft resolution: Angola, the Bahamas, Cape Verde, Greece, Honduras, Malaysia, Maldives, Seychelles and Trinidad and Tobago.

We are grateful to all those delegations that have given their support to this year's draft resolution by their sponsorship. The large number of sponsors represents broad and geographically widespread support, reflecting the importance attached to the mine ban Convention.

The problems caused by anti-personnel mines are among the great tragedies of our time. Anti-personnel mines kill and maim innocent civilians, including women and children, long after hostilities have ended. As remnants of war they seriously hamper economic and social development. They deny to societies and individuals basic humanitarian needs and human rights.

The mine ban Convention has established a political and legal framework for international cooperation on assistance to mine victims and mine clearance, including stockpile destruction. The overall objective of the Convention is to prevent new victims and to support survivors. To this end, the main focus remains on practical mine action activities in the field. In order to maintain momentum and be able to continue to mobilize the resources required for activities in the field, we also need a continuous multilateral process and an international focal point. Within the framework of the mine ban Convention, that is taken care of by the annual meetings of States parties and the inter-sessional work programme. It was significant that a large number of countries, particularly mine-affected countries and relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations, actively participated in the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, which took place in Geneva in September this year. It is equally important that the annual meetings of States parties and the inter-sessional work programme have managed to maintain the cooperative spirit, thus bringing about the essential partnership between mine-affected and other countries and between governments and non-governmental organizations. Another interesting feature of these meetings is the open-endedness that attracts the participation of both States parties and non-States parties to the Convention alike.

We still have a long way to go to solve the problems caused by anti-personnel mines. However, there are several encouraging developments which demonstrate that the Ottawa process and the Convention banning anti-personnel mines are making a difference. It is shown by the growing number of Governments acceding to and fully implementing the Convention, the significantly reduced use of anti-personnel mines, the dramatic drop in the production of such mines, the increased destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, the increased funding for mine action, more land being demined and, most importantly, the decreasing number of victims.

This year's draft resolution on the implementation of the mine ban Convention is an updated version of last year's resolution. In the preambular part we have added one paragraph recalling the Second Meeting of States Parties and corrected the number of States that have formally accepted the obligations of the Convention — now 107. In the operative part we have added a new paragraph welcoming the generous offer of the Government of Nicaragua to host the Third Meeting of States parties in September 2001 in Managua and consequently made an adjustment to the following operative paragraph.

We invite all those delegations in a position to do so to co-sponsor the draft resolution and would welcome the broadest possible support for it.

Mr. Westdal (Canada): I congratulate Norway on its leadership in the implementation of the Ottawa Convention and on the introduction of this text, which Canada wholeheartedly supports.

The draft resolution marks real and very heartening progress against landmines. At the recent Second Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, that progress was reviewed in detail and celebrated. More than 100 States have now formally accepted the obligations of the Convention, and together we are making a difference. Mine casualty rates are down, mine clearance proceeds apace, more and better help is reaching mine victims, some $250 million was allocated by donors last year to the ongoing campaign, more than 20 States parties have completed stockpile destruction, and the norms of the Convention are gaining influence and the practical respect of many still outside the pact. Moreover, the inter-sessional work programme has been inclusive, collegial, open, transparent, well focused and successful. Over the years to come that programme warrants the participation of all relevant actors whether or not they are States parties. Canada believes that, given all the good the Convention's implementation does in the world, this draft resolution as well warrants its full support.

Mr. Luck (Australia): I am taking the floor very briefly to offer our support to the delegations of Norway, Nicaragua and Mozambique on their draft resolution, document A/C.1/55/L.44, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction".

This past year has seen some gratifying consolidation and expansion of the norm against anti-personnel landmines which the Ottawa Convention has established. But as the delegation of Norway has already pointed out, we have a long way to go. We would like to recognize Norway's own important role over the past few months, including at the recent Meeting of States Parties. We now have a mechanism for more structured follow-up work in the form of the inter-sessional work programme, and in our view that mechanism is working well. It is leading to better coordination of mine action activities across the spectrum of issues that require attention. So when we encourage universalization of the Convention, we should at the same time aim for maximum participation in the inter-sessional work programme.

The focus of the draft resolution is again on the twin goals of universalization and effective implementation of the Convention, in particular the aspects of it which deal with the care, rehabilitation and reintegration of mine victims and mine clearance, as highlighted in operative paragraph 6. Like Norway and Canada, we hope the draft resolution can be adopted by consensus, as have its predecessors.

Mr. Mouro (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Brazil, on behalf of the Common Market of the South (MECOSUR) countries — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the associated countries of Bolivia and Chile, would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance that we attach to the adoption of measures designed to regulate the international maritime transport of radioactive wastes and spent nuclear fuel, with the highest possible levels of security. We wish to recall the concepts that the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay expressed in a Joint Declaration of 17 January 1997, issued as an official document of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Among those concepts the strengthening of the regulation of the transportation of radioactive material should include the timely notification regarding routes, the commitment to recover radioactive waste in case of accidents to ships and the payment of indemnities in case of damages. Thus, we are obliged to advocate all relevant forums continued improvement in all regulations and measures designed to make that transport safer in accordance with the general principles of international law today.

We believe that the notion of the abuse of rights in the context of highly dangerous activities and the system of objective responsibility form a good theoretical base on which to build effectively. Within the framework of the competent international bodies we are highly satisfied by the actions of the IAEA under resolution GC(42)RES/13, designed to encourage cooperation among international organizations that are involved in ensuring the safety of the transportation of radioactive materials, the establishment of service of security evaluation in transport, and the organization of training courses.

We would also like to highlight the adoption of resolution GC(43)RES/11, which urges States that practise such types of transport to provide guarantees that their regulations are governed by the regulations laid down by the IAEA and that they will fulfil their commitment to provide timely information concerning routes. The forty-fourth General Conference of the IAEA adopted resolution GC(44)RES/17, which progressively strengthens the international regulatory regime for the transport of radioactive materials, in line with the position of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile. That resolution includes important points such as the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment, the importance of protecting populations and the environment of small island States and other coastal States, and the importance of effective mechanisms of responsibility for damage caused by operations of international maritime transport of radioactive waste.

All these efforts have also been reflected in the report of the Disarmament Commission on nuclear-weapon-free zones, which promotes cooperation between them in applying regulations for the transport of these materials, and in the Final Document adopted by the last Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which establishes the role of security in the international transport of radioactive materials.

Mr. Petőcz (Slovakia): I should like to speak about the activities related to the amended mines Protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Since this is the first time I have taken the floor, let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I should also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Secretariat. Allow me to assure you of my fullest support in your endeavours to advance the work of this important body.

From 15 to 17 December 1999 the First Annual Conference of States Parties to Amended Protocol II, the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices, annexed to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), was held in Geneva. The Conference decided to recommend me for election as President of the Second Annual Conference, to be held from 11 to 13 December this year. After the resignation of Ambassador Johan Molander of Sweden, the President of the First Annual Conference, I took over as Acting President.

The First Annual Conference requested its President to carry out a number of tasks referred to in its report, inter alia, on behalf of the States parties, to exercise his authority to achieve the goal of the universality of amended Protocol II. To this effect, I have undertaken a series of consultations with non-States parties to amended Protocol II to encourage their adherence. Furthermore, in May I sent a letter to Ministers for Foreign Affairs of those States inviting their authorities to consider adherence to this instrument. That letter was sent after the Secretary-General had issued his own appeal, with similar content, addressed to the heads of State and/or Government of those States. As of today, 56 States have given notification of their consent to be bound by amended Protocol II. That represents an increment of 10 additional States since the First Annual Conference took place. Moreover, I have received positive signals indicating that several more accessions are under way. Quantitatively, 56 may not seem a very high number, yet it is commensurate with the relatively short time the Protocol has been in force. But in considering its universality qualitatively, it is indisputable that almost all of the largest inventories are already covered by this instrument. That is quite a persuasive argument for the Protocol's credibility. However, vigorous endeavours towards its further universalization should continue unabated. The focus should be oriented primarily towards those regions with the lowest level of adherence. In this respect, I should like to refer to one of the conclusions of the First Annual Conference, calling on States parties to promote wider adherence to

amended Protocol II in their respective regions. Let me once again, here in the First Committee, reiterate the call to those States that have not yet acceded to amended Protocol II to do so at the earliest possible date.

The First Annual Conference established the group of experts as its subsidiary body to consider several issues under amended Protocol II. That group, chaired by Colonel Erwin Dahinden of Switzerland, made eight concrete recommendations which were subsequently adopted by the Conference. Specifically, recommendation H called for structured discussions on the subjects of international technical information exchange, international cooperation on mine clearance, technical cooperation and assistance, and development of viable and cost-effective technologies that could eventually replace anti-personnel landmines. In this connection, I have undertaken a series of informal consultations which indicated support for the continuation of work on the above subjects during the inter-sessional period. Therefore, I proposed the holding of an informal meeting of experts of the States parties. The meeting was held on 31 May and 2 June this year in Geneva. Let me now briefly inform the Committee of the topics addressed during its deliberations.

The question of the participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of subsidiary bodies was raised by a number of States parties. Although the participation of non-governmental organizations may be beneficial to the work of the group of experts because of their valuable technical expertise and knowledge, other States parties expressed concern that it should not take on a political orientation and that the question should be subject to further discussion. During my consultations in the process of preparing for the Second Annual Conference I have tried to identify a consensual formula on the involvement of non-governmental organizations that would be in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference. In addition, the following ideas came up at the meeting: the possible establishment of a central clearing house of relevant information in the area of mine clearance, mine detection and other mine-related data, available for all important actors active in these fields; the possible establishment of an Internet home page with a view to improving the dissemination and management of international information in the context of amended Protocol II; and the possibility of future meetings on international cooperation and assistance.

Some States parties expressed their concern about the duplication of existing activities in the above-mentioned areas, especially with regard to anti-personnel landmines. In order to avoid such duplication, it may be necessary to closely coordinate future work in the area of international cooperation and assistance in the context of amended Protocol II with the inter-sessional activities of the Ottawa Convention. More specifically, I should like to promote cooperation and a relationship between these two important instruments that would multiply the synergistic effect of both, focusing primarily on the humanitarian aspects of their implementation. In this respect, I have already conducted a number of consultations.

Technical presentations and expositions are a possible means to foster technical cooperation and assistance. That kind of activity could be organized within the framework of the Second Annual Conference. With a view to the next CCW Review Conference, extensive consideration was given to possible improvements to amended Protocol II. The views on this question were quite divergent. The meeting, however, considered that the group of experts would serve as an important forum for continuing discussion and further exploration of this matter at an expert level. It also suggested that technical aspects relating to the CCW Review Conference should be discussed at an expert level. The importance of allocating sufficient time for a thorough preparation of the 2001 Conference was stressed. Finally, the meeting elaborated the idea of having a technical demonstration that could improve the background knowledge in terms of technical substance for the upcoming negotiations. The Swiss delegation announced that it was willing to carry out such a technical demonstration.

National annual reports are a very important source of structured information in the context of amended Protocol II. This instrument could be further improved if appropriate guidelines on how to fill out the different forms were developed. In this regard, the possibility of including additional forms, or improving existing ones, was also discussed. I take this opportunity to remind all States parties that have not yet submitted their national annual reports in accordance with the recommendation of the First Annual Conference — that is, eight weeks prior to the convening of annual conferences — to do so as soon as

possible, as required by article 13, paragraph 4 of the Protocol.

In conclusion, let me commend Ambassador Hu Xiaodi of China, Ambassador Petko Draganov of Bulgaria and the Chairman of the group of experts, Colonel Erwin Dahinden, for their cooperation. I appreciate the cooperation of all State and non-State actors, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and the other organizations engaged in humanitarian demining activities. Last but not least, I should like to express my thanks to the Geneva branch of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs for all its efforts to assist the Conference.

Mr. Salander (Sweden): On behalf of 59 sponsoring delegations, including my own delegation, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.50, on the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. My delegation appreciates the support it has received for this draft resolution, manifested in the large number of sponsoring countries. For the sake of brevity I will refrain from reading aloud the names of the 59 sponsors. We still welcome additional sponsoring delegations for this draft resolution.

The 1980 Convention is a framework convention with four annexed Protocols. Protocol I, adopted on 10 October 1980, deals with fragmentation weapons. Amended Protocol II, adopted on 3 May 1996, concerns the use on land of mines, booby traps and other devices. The third Protocol, on incendiary weapons, was adopted on 10 October 1980, and on 13 October 1995 Protocol IV, dealing with blinding laser weapons, was adopted. The Convention and its Protocols constitute a very essential and integral part of international law applicable to armed conflicts. The significantly increased occurrence of civilians being afflicted by armed conflicts since the end of the cold war is reason enough for us all to intensify our efforts to have the Convention and its Protocols fully implemented.

The purpose of the Convention and the Protocols is to place constraints on the conduct of war by restricting the use of conventional weapons which may cause excessive injuries or have indiscriminate effects on its victims. When implemented, the rules contained in these instruments will limit the suffering of civilians as well as combatants. The draft resolution before the Committee therefore calls upon all States to become parties to the Convention and its Protocols and to adhere to the provisions therein. If these instruments are made universal and their provisions are implemented and effectively adhered to, lives can be saved and suffering reduced. In this context, I should like to thank all those countries that have recently acceded to, or in other ways taken positive action towards adherence to, the Convention and its Protocols.

The Convention offers a framework for negotiations to gradually redefine or expand the categories of conventional weapons covered by the Protocols. The last Review Conference, in 1995, which continued in 1996, was an opportunity at which the High Contracting Parties succeeded in strengthening Protocol II and adopted the new Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons, Protocol IV. We are very pleased to note that both instruments have entered into force. The draft resolution before the Committee reflects these and other positive developments. Under amended Protocol II, States parties continue to meet annually to consult and cooperate with each other on all issues related to the operation of the Protocol. The First Annual Conference was held last December in Geneva, and this year's Second Annual Conference will be convened from 11 to 13 December in Geneva under the presidency of Ambassador Petöcz of Slovakia. In this context, we welcome the efforts made by Ambassador Petöcz to achieve the universality of amended Protocol II. I thank him for his statement reporting on his own efforts as well as those of the Secretary-General in this regard, and also reporting on the work conducted in May/June this year by the Group of Experts in Geneva. The draft resolution commends the efforts of both the President of the Conference and the Secretary-General towards the goal of the universality of amended Protocol II.

I should like to join Ambassador Petöcz in recalling the conclusion of the First Annual Conference calling on States parties to promote wider adherence to amended Protocol II in their respective regions. We hope that this year's Conference on the Protocol will provide a good opportunity to exchange views and thoughts concerning the operation and effect of the Protocol as well as on means to achieve further adherence to this instrument. We encourage all States, as well as the International Committee of the Red

Cross and other interested non-governmental organizations, to participate.

The draft resolution also addresses the issue of convening the second Review Conference for the Convention in 2001. It recommends that the Review Conference be held next December in Geneva. It is our understanding that there is a need for thorough preparation for the Review Conference, and therefore the draft resolution calls for two weeks of meetings of the Preparatory Committee, in addition to the one-day session on 14 December this year that has already been decided upon. The Review Conferences are important tools for addressing all issues concerning the Convention and its Protocols, how the operation of these instruments might be improved and how the Convention might be developed further. We hope that the Review Conference next year will be used to further strengthen the protection of civilians in situations of conflict and to improve the humanitarian situation after conflicts have ended. It is also our hope that States parties will take the opportunity offered to discuss whether other categories of conventional weapons should be regulated under the Convention and whether additional protocols would be desirable. We express our appreciation of the statement made by Ambassador Luck in the First Committee earlier this session that Australia would be willing to serve as President of the Review Conference in 2001.

Draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.50 intends to promote further universalization of and adherence to this very important body of humanitarian law. It also intends to promote a successful Review Conference in 2001 by providing for a thorough preparatory process. On behalf of all its sponsors I wish to express our sincere hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, as was the case with last year's resolution.

Mr. Sanders (Netherlands): As in previous years, my delegation wishes to take the floor in the First Committee in support of the draft resolution introduced by Sweden, contained in document A/C.1/55/L.50, on the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, generally known as the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW). The Convention and its Protocols are a major instrument of international humanitarian law and serve to reduce unnecessary suffering of combatants and civilians. They build on the fundamental norm of the law of armed conflict that military necessity in armed conflict has to be constantly set against the humanitarian objective of preventing unnecessary suffering. It is imperative to apply this norm to all categories of conventional weapons and munitions, and my delegation therefore welcomes the initiative taken by the International Committee of the Red Cross recently to study the modalities for a new fifth protocol to the Convention to deal with remnants of war. The purpose of such a new protocol would be to reduce hazards for, in particular, the civilian population posed by unexploded ordnance after hostilities have ceased. In fact, unexploded ordnance should self-destruct or deactivate, as appropriate, at the moment it no longer serves a military purpose.

My delegation looks forward to beginning deliberations on a new protocol at any appropriate time. At the same time, it is necessary to promote the effectiveness of the existing instruments through adherence by all States. My delegation therefore fully supports the call, contained in operative paragraphs 1 and 2 of the draft resolution, for States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and its Protocols as soon as possible. We also welcome the preparatory process, as defined in operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, to prepare for the next Review Conference, to be held, it is hoped, in December 2001.

I should like to conclude by expressing our appreciation to Ambassador Luck of Australia for his willingness to work with us and others to strengthen further the CCW and its Protocols. We fully support his candidature for the presidency of the Review Conference. We join the Swedish delegation in expressing the wish that this important draft resolution be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Luck (Australia): I should like to support the draft resolution in document A/C.1/55/L.50, just introduced by the delegation of Sweden and supported by the delegations of Slovakia and the Netherlands, entitled "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects" (CCW). The Convention and its Protocols constitute a key instrument of international humanitarian law, and one that we have supported strongly through its development and augmentation. Others have just outlined its key obligations, so I do not need to do so again. Suffice it to say that without

this instrument, and the adherence of key States to its obligations, the suffering of both combatants and civilian victims of armed conflict would increase.

As a State party to the Convention and all its Protocols, Australia feels very strongly about the need for a concerted effort to achieve their universalization. The calls in operative paragraphs 1 and 2 of the draft resolution, which is traditionally adopted by consensus, will, it is hoped, prove that we share this goal not only with States parties but also with the entire international community. The goal of universalization should be an integral part of the ongoing work of the Convention and its Protocols. We are also supportive of efforts to strengthen the instrument, with a view to maintaining its value and relevance. In that regard, we will look carefully at all proposals put forward in the context of the forthcoming Review Conference of the Convention and approach these proposals with an open mind and an underlying motivation to improve this instrument wherever possible.

We welcome the decision in operative paragraph 5 to establish a Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference. The proposals under consideration will require careful study, and we will need to remain flexible on the issue of the allocation of time for preparatory work, but the proposed programme in operative paragraph 5 is a good start.

I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate that Australia would be willing to serve as President of the 2001 Review Conference. We look forward to the support of other States parties to the Convention for our candidature and in that vein warmly welcome the expression of support just made by the Netherlands, as well as the interest and encouragement we have received from other delegations present here. Finally, I should like to join preceding speakers on this issue in expressing the wish that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Mochochoko (Lesotho): I have the pleasure of introducing draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.14/Rev.1, entitled "United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa". The draft resolution is presented by Lesotho in its capacity as Chairman of the African Group for the month of October and Togo as Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States. Since its submission last Friday the draft resolution has been slightly revised and thus reissued as A/C.1/55/L.14/Rev.1 in order to meet the concerns of all delegations.

I wish to make a few more minor revisions. In operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution all the words after the word "contributions" in the third line should be deleted and replaced by the following wording:

> "in order to strengthen the programmes and activities of the Regional Centre and facilitate their implementation;".

That revision has been made in order to harmonize this year's draft resolution with last year's resolution.

Except for minor revisions the current draft resolution is in all material respects the same as last year's resolution, which was adopted by consensus. In short, the preambular paragraphs refer, among other things, to the Charter provisions relating to the General Assembly's functions in the maintenance of international peace and security, including the principles governing disarmament and arms limitation, and recalls all previous resolutions on the Centre.

In its operative paragraphs the draft resolution takes note of the Secretary-General's report and commends the activities of the Centre and the support of African States for it. It reaffirms the need to revitalize the Centre and in this regard for the Centre to be provided with the necessary resources. An appeal is made for all to make voluntary contributions to enable the Centre to meet the demands of the membership, and to this end the Secretary-General is requested to continue to provide all necessary support, including by facilitating close cooperation between the Centre and the OAU.

The draft resolution reflects the importance the African Group continues to attach to the work of the Centre. It is the African Group's hope that once again this year the First Committee will show its solidarity with Africa by adopting the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Ragab (Egypt): I have the pleasure of introducing the draft resolution entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", document A/C.1/55/L.16. Such resolutions have been adopted annually by the General Assembly since 1974. Since 1980 the Assembly has adopted them by consensus — the consensus that has

emerged in the General Assembly over the years as a result of the steadfast support it received in bilateral declarations and in various multilateral forums.

Just recently, the 1999 substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission adopted by consensus principles and guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the regions concerned. The 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) also adopted by consensus an initiative encouraging all States, especially States of the Middle East, to reaffirm or declare their support for the objective of establishing an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons, as well as other weapons of mass destruction; to transmit their declarations of support to the Secretary-General of the United Nations; and to take practical steps towards that objective. These commitments constitute a clear testimony to the viability and relevance of this concept in the Middle East.

The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would greatly contribute to ending the proliferation of the threat from nuclear weapons, would strengthen the security of all States of the region and, consequently, would be deemed an important confidence-building measure towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. For more than 18 years the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone has been unanimously anticipated, a record that is testimony to the overwhelming support for the creation of the zone. However, the plain truth is that this objective seems to be eluding us. No concrete measures, no operational measures and no serious talks have yet been held, formally or informally, among regional parties with a view to bringing into practice what all of us here seem to aspire to and preach. Despite the general frustration over the stagnation of the efforts to establish the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone, Egypt firmly supports the implementation of the resolution adopted annually by this body. Egypt continues to be committed to the earliest establishment and implementation of the principles and provisions of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and, indeed, of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction. In a region fraught with tension, such as the Middle East, the zone cannot be looked upon as an a posteriori peace dividend but as an essential confidence-building measure facilitating and leading the way towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. Though we fully realize that peace, security and stability in the region of the Middle East will be achieved only when a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of disputes in the Middle East are attained, it is essential to create the necessary conditions and suitable climate to facilitate the achievement of this objective. In our view, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone would contribute substantially in this regard.

It is our considered opinion that the time is now more than ripe to proceed towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. For this reason operative paragraph 10 of the draft resolution endeavours once again to utilize the good offices of the Secretary-General in order to inject the required impetus into this process. It would be timely for us today to seriously embark on laying the solid foundations on which to proceed. In this regard, the same operative paragraph requests the Secretary-General to pursue his consultations with the States of the region and other concerned parties.

I also invite the Committee's attention to the eighth preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 9, in which reference is made to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. This initiative aims at broadening the scope of the 1974 initiative by adding to it chemical and biological weapons. Since the announcement of this initiative by President Hosni Mubarak on 9 April 1990, later encompassed by his broader initiative in June 1998 to convene an international conference to free the world from all weapons of mass destruction, the 1990 initiative has been attracting an ever-growing degree of support. The Security Council, for example, adopted resolution 687 (1991), dated 8 April 1991, paragraph 14 of which reiterates in essence the need to work towards the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, the Secretary-General proposed in his Millennium report, document A/54/2000, the convening of a major international conference that would help to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

Finally, I commend to the First Committee this draft resolution and earnestly hope that it will receive the same support that similar resolutions have received in previous years, and will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Mohammed (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): Our delegation wishes to comment on draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.16, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East".

All the Arab States have adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Nevertheless, their adherence has not provided them with the necessary security requirements in the face of the continuing Israeli nuclear threat. The international community, represented by specialized agencies, did not assume the required role to put a stop to the Israeli nuclear threat or to compel Israel to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. When the Iraqi nuclear facilities placed under the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) were subjected to an aggression by the Zionist entity in 1981, the Security Council adopted resolution 487 (1981) calling upon that entity to place its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. But up to the present moment it has refused to comply with that resolution or with other resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. That entity's blatant defiance of international resolutions, coupled with its expansionist policy at the expense of Arab territories, all subject the region to very serious threats. In addition, the practices of the Zionist entity recently in the occupied Palestinian territories and the continued occupation of the Syrian Golan are but the latest proof that there is a fragile security situation in the region as a result of the policies of that entity. That is why the security and stability of the Middle East necessitates doing away with all weapons of mass destruction so as to make the zone free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, in pursuance of paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

Israel's continuing nuclear programme outside the international regime for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the refusal of the Zionist entity to adhere to the NPT, or to place its facilities under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA, presents a threat to Arab national security and diminishes the credibility and universality of the NPT. The consecration of the status quo by forcing all the States of the region, with the exception of Israel, to adhere to the regime of non-proliferation represents a selective policy and an imbalance which threatens the security and stability of the region. It is not acceptable. That is why the international community must demand universal guarantees for the implementation of all the provisions dealing with non-proliferation without applying a double standard, and to adopt all the necessary measures which will achieve that purpose, in keeping with the provisions of the Charter.

Our delegation will join the consensus on the draft resolution in document A/C.1/55/L.16, even though it does not fully satisfy the concerns we have just expressed, which could have been included in the draft resolution, because of the dangers represented by Israeli nuclear weapons to international peace and security at the regional and international levels.

Mr. Franco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Colombian delegation has the honour to take the floor on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group on the agenda item regarding transparency in armaments.

The strengthening of regional peace and security is one of the key objectives of the countries members of the Rio Group, and we are convinced that the application of measures to build confidence and promote security will help to create a favourable climate for the effective limitation of conventional arms, which, in turn, will make it possible to devote a larger proportion of resources to economic and social development. In this regard, the heads of State and Government of the region pledged at the Second Summit of the Americas, which was held in Santiago, Chile, in 1998, to continue to promote transparency in defence policies concerning, inter alia, modernization of their armed forces, comparisons of military expenditures in the region and the improvement and expansion of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

The member countries of the Rio Group, in order to promote a lasting structure of peace and cooperation among the States, have pledged, within the framework of the inter-American system, to accept as the guiding principle of disarmament, and of policies for the control and limitation of arms at the regional level, the need to promote security and stability with the lowest possible level of forces that meets legitimate defence requirements. We also committed ourselves to contribute effectively to international efforts in this area, in accordance with the Constitutions and domestic laws of our countries, as well as with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the Organization of American States and the Charter of the United Nations.

In this regard, in June 1999 in Guatemala City the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions was opened for signature. The objective of this Convention is to contribute to greater openness and transparency in the procurement of conventional arms through the exchange of information on procurements, with a view to promoting confidence among the States of the region. In addition to imports and exports, the States parties must also provide information on procurements through national production. Moreover, States that are not members of the OAS can contribute to the aims of the Convention by providing information on exports and imports to countries that are members of the OAS. We, the countries of the Rio Group, reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions.

Since the adoption of resolution 46/36 L this Committee has been debating the necessity of including information on the production and stockpiling of the seven categories of arms covered by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. In this regard, we have taken note of the conclusions of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, document A/55/281, which mentions that with respect to the further development of the Register, the Group had examined the possibility of including procurement by national production. In this regard, we should like to state that the Group reaffirmed the objective of expanding without delay the scope of the Register and welcomed the growing number of States that voluntarily submit reports on their military arsenals and procurement by national production.

Trade in arms is only one phase in the life cycle of arms, which begins with the process of research and development, then enters the production phase and, finally, the trading phase. Thus, policies aimed solely at the last stage of the cycle, arms trade, will be incomplete and ineffective if the transparency measures are not applied to the entire cycle. We also note that the Group considered the possibility of including small arms and light weapons within the scope of the Register, but decided to await the convening of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

In addition, the Group of Experts acknowledged in its report the importance of the principle of transparency and its relevance to weapons of mass destruction. In its analysis of the proposals to add a new category to include such weapons, the Group considered the nature of the Register, the concerns about regional security and existing international legal instruments on the subject, as well as General Assembly resolution 46/36 L. Taking all these factors into account, especially the fact that the Register covers only conventional arms, the Group agreed that the item of transparency in weapons of mass destruction was a subject that should be taken up by the General Assembly.

It is necessary to involve arms-producing countries so that they will discourage investment in research and development for new types of arms, promote the conversion of military industries and appropriately monitor trading circuits and arms transfers to prevent diversion into illicit channels. By the same token, arms-importing countries should exercise moderation in their demand and thus avoid promoting arms races. Greater openness and transparency in armaments should help to promote mutual confidence, reduce tensions and strengthen regional and international peace and security while allowing us to advance to the more ambitious phase of self-control in the procurement, manufacture and transfer of conventional arms in order to prevent the arms races that are already manifest in regions where new weapons systems and advanced launching systems have already been introduced.

Mr. Nhleko (Swaziland): Since I am taking the floor for the first time, permit me to associate the delegation of the Kingdom of Swaziland with the kind sentiments expressed to you, Sir, following your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I assure you that the Committee is already benefiting from your expertise and forthrightness in conducting its debate.

The Kingdom of Swaziland has always attached great importance to the work of the United Nations in ensuring that the threat caused by nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is totally eliminated. Now more than ever, the dangers of nuclear proliferation require our continued vigilance, and the role played by the United Nations in creating a stable security environment is more crucial than ever before. Our leaders at the recent historic Millennium Summit

reaffirmed the need to maintain peace and security more effectively when they declared, in paragraph 8 of the Millennium Declaration, that "We will ... seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction." Notwithstanding the United Nations achievements in this regard, we note very sadly that some regions of the world remain in serious danger. At the same time, some countries that still possess nuclear weapons have not fulfilled their commitments under the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Thus, the world faces the spectre of a nuclear war for the first time since the end of the cold war. In this regard, my delegation wishes to reiterate the call by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM): with the end of the cold war there is no justification for the maintenance of nuclear arsenals or concepts of international security based on promoting and developing military alliances and policies of nuclear deterrence.

Despite the different perspectives that States members may have on the current state of affairs in global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues, there is no doubt that much more can be done, and needs to be done. The common dream of a world free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is yet to be realized. Nuclear disarmament is the responsibility of all States, and all of them must be involved in the process leading to that goal. To that end, the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, is central for to the strengthening of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. My delegation supports efforts being undertaken at the Conference on Disarmament to restart negotiations without delay on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally effective and verifiable treaty to ban the production of fissile material. This we do in the sincere hope that all States which have not yet done so will eventually stop the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The Kingdom of Swaziland will continue to encourage the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons and adherence by all States to general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. We acknowledge the steps taken in this direction towards applying increased transparency in the field of nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we urge all non-nuclear-weapon States to conclude agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with a view to enabling the IAEA to carry out its work unimpeded. The IAEA's international safeguards system has proved to be of great value in nuclear non-proliferation, and for this reason we must make sure that the existing safeguards system is strengthened to enhance the Agency's ability to detect clandestine nuclear activity and ensure the efficiency of the resulting safeguards system.

The Kingdom of Swaziland welcomes the steady increase in the number of ratifications of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is a key instrument in the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime. The Treaty's early entry into force still remains a high priority for the international community, and we trust that the drive for ratification set up by the Secretary-General during the Millennium Summit will continue to yield positive results and that before long the required number of ratifications will be obtained. My delegation wishes to commend the role played by civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations, in disarmament issues. Their expertise and dedication to many of the issues with which we are constantly faced has been crucial. Their contribution to and work in our endeavour to build a safer and better world does not go unnoticed.

Finally, our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons requires as a key element that nuclear proliferation be controlled. We in Swaziland believe that increased vigilance on non-proliferation is essential to achieve that goal. It is important that we all continue to support efforts aimed at strengthening strict, effective and complete disarmament so that we can create a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.36, entitled "Conclusion of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons", on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Colombia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Fiji, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Viet Nam and my own delegation.

The Charter's most fundamental principle states that Member States in their international relations must refrain from the use or threat of use of force. This obligation applies to the use or threat of force with all kinds of weapons. In 1929, an article in *The New York Times* by Will Rogers stated, "You can't say civilization don't advance, however, for in every war they kill you in a new way."

Unfortunately, after the Second World War the emergence of nuclear weapons completely changed the nature of war and the manner in which people would be killed. The very first United Nations General Assembly resolution affirmed the need to outlaw nuclear weapons. The fundamental obligation not to use or threaten the use of nuclear weapons is thus based on the Charter's prohibition of the use or threat of use of force.

When the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was being negotiated the non-nuclear-weapon States sought credible and binding guarantees that they would not be threatened by the use of nuclear weapons and that in case of such a threat, the nuclear-weapon States would come to their assistance. The response to these expectations was dismal and ultimately is the source of much of the nuclear danger that we confront today. Security guarantees were not written into the NPT, nor into a protocol. The Conference of Non-Nuclear-Weapon States, convened in 1968 at Pakistan's initiative, was prevented by the NPT's main sponsors from reaching a consensus. The security assurances offered by three nuclear-weapon States in Security Council resolution 255 (1968) were partial and conditional, as were the unilateral statements that were made in 1979 at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That special session called for the conclusion of an international instrument on security guarantees by the Conference on Disarmament. Unfortunately, after more than two decades, the Conference has been unable to conclude such an international agreement.

During the cold war the Conference on Disarmament could not evolve a common formula for the offer of unconditional and credible assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. The nuclear-weapon States wished to exclude non-nuclear-weapon States members of the rival alliances. There was considerable hope that with the end of the cold war a common formula would become possible. Unfortunately, the nuclear-weapon States have proceeded in the opposite direction. After the indefinite extension of the NPT, Security Council resolution 984 (1995) was even more limited in scope and credibility than its predecessor, Security Council resolution 255 (1968). Some nuclear Powers asserted the right to retain their nuclear weapons indefinitely. Statements were made reserving the right to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States, even those States that are parties to the NPT or parties to nuclear-weapon-free zones, in case these States used or threatened the use of other weapons of mass destruction. That represented a significant erosion of even the limited assurances contained in Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995). Later, a nuclear alliance announced a new doctrine which envisaged the out-of-area use of force and increased the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States. The spread of nuclear weapons to certain regions has added to the possibility of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in our world.

The sponsors believe that the Conference on Disarmament has an important and vital task to reverse the progressively negative trends regarding the possible use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The call in draft resolution A/C.1/55/L.36 for effective international arrangements is even more urgent and important today than in the past. The achievement of an unconditional and legally binding commitment by all nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten the use of nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon State would have the following positive effects: it would reduce the danger of the use of nuclear weapons; it would constitute an important confidence-building measure among nuclear-weapon States; it would provide greater credibility for the endeavours to halt nuclear proliferation; and it would facilitate the process of nuclear disarmament and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

The sponsors trust that the Conference on Disarmament will re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances early next year and that it will make rapid progress towards reaching the vital objectives set out in this draft resolution, which we hope will be adopted with the widest possible support.

Mr. Du Preez (South Africa): The South African delegation wishes to strongly support the adoption of the draft resolution circulated as document

A/C.1/55/L.44, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction", introduced this morning by the delegation of Norway on behalf of the sponsors. The mine ban Convention continues to set new standards in disarmament. More than 100 States having ratified or acceded to the Convention in less than three years is a record-breaking achievement.

South Africa welcomes the successful Second Meeting of States Parties to the mine ban Convention, which reinforced the commitments by States parties to completely and fully implement the provisions of the Convention. These commitments are evident in a continued eradication of anti-personnel mine stockpiles and a decrease in mine victim casualties, while funding for mine action programmes is rising. Moreover, the international norm established by the Convention is having a global impact, as trade in these weapons has almost disappeared and production has declined dramatically. Furthermore, the inclusive nature of partnerships between Governments and civil society in the creation of the Convention has been maintained and reinforced through the standing committee of experts. An enormous amount of implementation work has been done effectively through this mechanism with minimum cost implications.

Anti-personnel mines, however, continue to be used in conflicts around the world and continue to maim and kill innocent people long after conflicts have been resolved. The impact of these indiscriminate weapons also impedes socio-economic development, particularly in developing countries. So as to completely rid the world of these terrible weapons, South Africa continues to believe that all Governments have a responsibility to accede to this Convention as soon as possible. It is for this reason that we strongly support this draft resolution, which again calls on all States to ratify the Convention without delay and for States and other relevant parties to work together to promote, support and advance the care, rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of mine victims, mine awareness programmes, the removal of anti-personnel mines placed throughout the world and the assurances of their destruction. We wish to echo the Norwegian delegation's call that maximum support again be given to the draft resolution on this subject.

The Chairman: If no other delegation wishes to speak at this stage, I would ask that delegations introduce the remaining draft resolutions to the Committee as soon as possible since there are only two more meetings for this phase of our work.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.